

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ACDA-19 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

MBFR VIENNA 25

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 14839

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, FR, GE, UR

SUBJ: THOUGHTS ON THE SOVIET PRESENCE IN BERLIN AND THE GDR

REF: A. BONN 13117

B. BERLIN 1693

1. SUMMARY. WHILE WE DO NOT DISCOUNT ENTIRELY THE
POSSIBILITY THAT THE GDR MAY SOMEHOW ADJUST THE STATUS
OF EAST BERLIN ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY
(REF A), WE BELIEVE THAT IT VERY UNLIKELY THAT THE SOVIET
UNION WILL SUPPORT ANY CHANGE WHICH EITHER REDUCES THE
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LEGALITY OF ITS PRESENCE IN EAST BERLIN OR WHICH PLACES

ANY SIGNIFICANT STRAIN ON ITS DETENTE POLICIES WITH THE FRG AND THE THREE WESTERN POWERS. SIMILARLY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD SEE IT TO ITS INTEREST TO DECLARE, IN CONCERT WITH THE GDR, THAT A PEACE TREATY IS NO LONGER NECESSARY (REF B). END SUMMARY.

2. THE U.S., THE UK, AND FRANCE ALL MADE CLEAR TO THE SOVIET UNION AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS ERA OF DETENTE THAT BERLIN WAS A KEYSTONE IN THE STRUCTURE OF EAST-WEST RELATIONS. THE FLARE-UP OF U.S. OFFICIAL OPINION ON THE TRAFFIC BLOCKAGES BY THE GDR DURING THE FEA AFFAIR HAS REAFFIRMED THIS POINT, AS HAVE MANY OTHER LESS GRAPHIC PRESENTATIONS FROM THE WEST. THE SOVIETS ARE CERTAINLY AWARE THAT ANY OVERT ACTION ON THEIR PART TO CHANGE THE STATUS OF EAST BERLIN WOULD PROVOKE A MUCH STRONGER REACTION.

3. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS AT THIS TIME WISH TO WAKE ANY SLEEPING DOGS IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., WHEN THEY ARE STILL NOT COMPLETELY SURE OF PRESIDENT FORD'S ATTITUDE TO THE USSR, AND WHEN THE LONG HARD BATTLE OVER MFN SEEMS NEARLY WON. EVEN IF THE ACTION WERE TAKEN BY THE GDR WITHOUT ANY OVERT SOVIET COMPLICITY, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT THE THREE POWERS, AND CERTAINLY THE FRG, WOULD READ THE MOVE AS A UNILATERAL ACTION ON THE PART OF THE SOVIET UNION TO CHANGE THE CITY'S STATUS. WHILE WE DO NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THIS MAY INDEED HAPPEN SOME DAY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE SOVIETS CONSIDER THAT THE TIME IS NOW OPPORTUNE.

4. THE TIMING, IN FACT, COULD HARDLY BE WORSE. NOT ONLY WOULD U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS COME UNDER STRAIN AT AN AWKWARD TIME, BUT SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE FRG WOULD RECEIVE A SEVERE JOLT ON THE EVE OF THE VISIT BY SCHMIDT -- ANOTHER NEW WESTERN LEADER OF WHOM THE SOVIETS ARE NOT YET SURE. THE SOVIET PRESS, INCIDENTALLY, HAS BEEN SUBTLY PLAYING UP THE FACT THAT THE FRG IS NOW THEIR NUMBER ONE TRADING PARTNER IN THE WEST, AND

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THEY VALUE THE "OTHER GERMANY" AS A COMMERCIAL PARTNER WITH MUCH TO OFFER. DEALS WITH THE FRG WHICH REQUIRE CONSIDERABLE FRG GOVERNMENT SUPPORT, SUCH AS THE NUCLEAR PLANT PLANNED FOR KALININGRAD, WOULD BECOME CONSIDERABLY LESS FREQUENT IF THE SOVIET UNION ACTS IN A WAY TO AROUSE PUBLIC OPINION ON THE RIGHT HALF OF THE FRG'S POLITICAL SPECTRUM

5. FINALLY, AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE DO NOT HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD WILLINGLY GIVE UP ANY PORTION OF THE FIRM CONTROL THEY HAVE OVER EAST BERLIN, BOTH BECAUSE OF THE INNATE IMPORTANCE OF THE CITY AND BECAUSE THEIR LEGAL PRESENCE THERE GIVES THEM CONTROL OVER GDR REACTIONS TO SOVIET DETENTE POLICIES. THE SOVIET HANDLING OF THE MEDLEY INCIDENT, IN WHICH THEY STRONGLY ASSERTED PRIMACY OVER THE GDR IN HANDLING A GI CAUGHT BREAKING A GDR LAW IN EAST BERLIN, SUGGESTS THAT THEY CONTINUE TO BE AWARE OF THE SENSITIVITY OF THE CITY'S STATUS.

6. WE ALSO DOUBT -- FOR REASONS SIMILAR TO THOSE NOTED ABOVE -- THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD WANT TO TAKE ANY UNILATERAL STEP WHICH WOULD BE CONSTRUED AS AFFECTING FOUR POWER RESPONSIBILITY FOR GERMANY AS A WHOLE, SUCH AS A DECLARATION THAT A PEACE TREATY IS NO LONGER NECESSARY. SUCH A DECLARATION WOULD ONLY IMPLICITLY BURDEN RELATIONS WITH THE THREE POWERS AND THE FRG, BUT IT WOULD REDUCE THE LEGAL BASE FOR SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE GDR AND MAKE THEM DEPENDENT ON BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WITH THE GDR. THOUGH SUCH AGREEMENTS WOULD PRESUMABLY POSE NO PROBLEM AT PRESENT, THE SOVIETS DOUBTLESS WOULD RATHER NOT HAVE TO BOTHER WITH THEM, AND IN ANY CASE THEY COULD PERHAPS BECOME A PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE.

7. IN SUM, WE BELIEVE THE SOVIETS ARE SATISFIED WITH THE STATUS QUO ON GERMANY AND BERLIN, AND PARTICULARLY AT THIS TIME ARE NOT INCLINED TO START ROCKING THE BOAT.
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